From: ecsd@transbay.net@inetgw
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/23/02 10:16pm
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

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I regard the Microsoft Corporation to be the single greatest threat
to the future of personal computing and to the freedom to use the
Internet as one sees fit.

In my opinion, Microsoft deliberately engineers their software to be
incompatible with existing and proposed standards in order to create
and maintain a "Microsoft world", in which one is forced to use
Microsoft products and methodologies when working with computers.
If one seeks alternatives, one finds few of them because companies
are unwilling to invest in providing support for alternatives, given
Microsoft's current domination of the PC OS (operating system) market.

The newspapers reported some time ago the demand that Microsoft be
required to support alternative platforms as part of the separate
settlement with the nine states that did not settle along with the
government. I agree with this requirement - I think every piece of
application software provided by Microsoft should be made available
to run on the Unix platform as well. This is to include Apple's OS X
operating system, Linux and FreeBSD, if not also Sun's Solaris, HP's
HP/UX and others. Microsoft perceives Linux as the single largest
threat to its absolute domination of the PC market, as well it should,
inasmuch as Linux is more stable and secure than Microsoft Windows.

Microsoft wants absolutely everyone to use its products to do useful work.
Microsoft, however, is not competant to produce adequate-quality software
for use on the Internet. Consider the issue of computer viruses. Recall
the "Melissa" virus and numbers of other viruses that have arrived on
the Internet as of late. For "Melissa" I recall a figure of $11 billion
in damages due to lost productivity and data worldwide. The fact is that
Microsoft allowed this to occur due to negligence - Unix systems were
not affected, and in fact Unix systems are not subject to "viruses" as
people commonly think of them - these viruses are targeted at security
holes and design flaws in the Microsoft operating systems and application
software. Microsoft never offered any compensation for these losses, never
apologized, and never admitted that encouraging people to continue to use
their software puts people at risk for further such damage. The entire
"antivirus" software industry was developed around the susceptibility of
Microsoft software to problems of this kind. I think if any entity can
force people to use its products and methods, it is equally responsible
to insure that people not only are not harmed, but are actively benefitted
through that use.

Microsoft's Public Relations strategy appears to depend on the perception
many people have that there is no viable alternative to Microsoft software,
and that only Microsoft knows how to produce software to perform useful work
on computers. I believe it has been thoroughly established in the concluded
antitrust case that Microsoft expends a great deal of attention and effort
in ensuring that people are NOT afforded alternatives - competitors are
bought out or threatened with lethal market tactics if they try to proceed

independently from Microsoft. It is Microsoft's stated goal to replace Unix
with Windows wherever possible, as quickly as possible, despite the fact that
the Unix operating system is superior in every respect. Unix made the Internet
possible in the first place; Microsoft was years late in recognizing the
value of the Internet and was years late in providing a means for people to
use their computers to access it. Microsoft is willing to work to destroy
a work of great and recognized value because it is a threat to Microsoft's
"profits", wherein presumably Microsoft was always entitled to make money
from anyone's use of a PC for any reason and these "other" systems are
"interfering" with that goal and the public at large is expected to acquiesce
to Microsoft's self-assumed prerogatives even if the public is then deprived
of access to superior products.

I have heard, though I find it difficult to believe, that Microsoft announced
intentions to "modify TCP/IP to
No one man or corporation is entitled to arrogate unto itself the power and
authority to dictate standards and practices in the personal computing or
Internet arenas. This is, however, Microsoft's goal.

The Microsoft Corporation could completely and totally vanish tomorrow, and
while there would certainly be disruptions in the PC and software industries,
in fact nothing much would change and dozens of companies would have replacement
products in the market within six months. In fact, development monies would
be freed up and people could enter the market to produce non-Microsoft-based
software for profit without fear of being crushed by a large malevolent
corporation which operates as if it is the only valid player in the software
market.

Microsoft's claims that their design requires the bundling of portions
of application package features into the operating system are false. (e.g.
the claim that Internet Explorer is an integral portion of the operating
system and cannot be removed.) I completed coursework for a Master's degree
in Computer Science at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1980. Microsoft's
claims are justified only to the extent that they have deliberately
engineered their operating systems to support those claims. A graduate
student who produced operating system designs similar to Microsoft's would
have failed their courses in 1980 and therever after. The poor security and
performance of Microsoft's operating systems are direct consequences of their
poor design "methodologies", if Microsoft even thinks in such terms.

I have no doubt that if Linux were something Microsoft could "buy", it would
buy it to put it out of business, or it would be stripped and hobbled and
be sold for hundreds of dollars, in contrast to Linux's open-source origins.

I think AOL Time Warner has done an awful job of maintaining Netscape versus
Internet Explorer - AOL could have done much more with Netscape and should
have. But in my job as the operator of a computer store and ISP since 1995,
I have witnessed the rise of Netscape and watched it replaced by Internet
Explorer step-by-step in exactly the same fashion as other common software -

word processors (Word), spreadsheets (Excel), presentation software (Powerpoint) -
who can name competing products in these areas? Fewer and fewer people as time
goes by. I am convinced that Microsoft engineers their websites to cause
problems for non-Microsoft browers, or perhaps specifically for Netscape.
I try to access a Microsoft or Microsoft-driven website with the Netscape browser
only to have the access fail on the first attempt but SUCCEED on the next
attempt. How many people would DISbelieve the first failure and try again?
How many people would blame the Netscape browser for the problem and switch to
Internet Explorer instead?

The HTTP protocol is an international standard produced by a standards body.
Yet I encounter numbers of websites driven by Microsoft software that CAN ONLY
BE ACCESSED USING INTERNET EXPLORER because site designers are using Microsoft
"standard features" that are not "standards" at all, but proprietary extensions
introduced by Microsoft explicitly to raise barriers to the use of non-Microsoft
products. Microsoft encourages people to use Microsoft "methodologies" without
warning people that to do so makes their work ususable by users of non-Microsoft
products. Complaints to companies about their implicit forcing of the use of the
Internet Explorer browser often go ignored on the notion that "everybody uses
Internet Explorer" (so why should we rewrite our website to suit an open international
STANDARD when it is so easy to use what Microsoft gives us to use to write our
website?)

Any corporation so damaging of whole industries and so bent on domination and
control should be punished and put in its place. If the order to split the
company into an operating systems company and an applications software company
had gone through, presumably the applications company would begin producing
software for Linux and FreeBSD, and the operating systems company would go out
of business in several years as the alternatives were seen to be superior,
as they are. Nobody would want to support an operating system (Windows) that
is so poorly designed and which crashes and hangs and behaves so oddly and poorly
and which is as expensive to maintain as Windows. Nobody would, but they are
forced to do so as things stand now.

If we can't have that, I do certainly agree that Microsoft should be required to
make its application software available to run on Linux and FreeBSD, and I agree
that the Internet Explorer application should be disintegrated from Windows and
spun off into a separate company. Microsoft should be forced to compete on a level
playing field and to earn its money honestly. No offers of cash grants or "free
software to schools" should be accepted whatsoever - the Microsoft corporation
must be structurally modified as much as possible to prevent it from further
abusing its current dominance in the industry. Microsoft should not be allowed
to bundle applications with its operating system - the applications should be
offered for sale on the open market, just as all Microsoft's competitors have
to do with their products.

It's worth noting, in closing, that Judge Jackson wrote as part of his opinion
that Microsoft was charging TWICE as much for its operating system software as
was warranted. No wonder Microsoft can afford to bundle 'free' software with the

OS - it was already paid for by the consumer without their consent! And we have of course never heard that Microsoft was considering rebates or refunds based on its overcharges.

No judgement could be too harsh for Microsoft. Tens of millions of virus-infected PCs and millions of hours and dollars of wasted time and lost productivity testify to that. I will not think the world is safe for my industry as long as Microsoft can unilaterally engineer any part of it. I would as soon see Microsoft out of business entirely, but short of that it should be reduced to what it does reasonably well - writing office software, and that's all. Its highly-paid staff of intelligent software professionals should be returned to the labor pool to start doing something truly useful with open-source technologies.

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